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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, June 8, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "DANGEROUS AND WORTHLESS REDUCING AGENTS." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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Monday brings another report from your correspondent with the Food and Drug Administration. Reducing agents -- dangerous and worthless preparations now on the market -- are the subject today. A timely topic, for the swimming-suit season is upon us; the season that tempts women -- and men also -- to find a get-thin-quick scheme, something that will cause them to "cut down expanses" without any effort.

"A good many people," quoting your correspondent, "are not satisfied with a safe and sane exercise-and-diet routine. They don't want to reduce in a normal way, by using a balanced diet but going easy on the high-calory foods -- fats, sweets, and starches. They'd rather buy a bottle of Suzy's Slim-O or Whosit's Wate-Off, and hope that the pounds will slither away like magic. If the pounds do slither away like magic, it may mean that the victim is using one of the new and dangerous reducing drugs that racketeers are still selling, in spite of reports of deaths caused by their compounds."

And here's a brief discussion of all the fat-reducing preparations on the market today. Your correspondent classifies them roughly into three groups. Quoting directly:

"In the first group are those that reduce by starvation -- the preparations that contain nothing but wholesome food substances, pleasantly flavored, usually sold in small containers for a dollar or more. The directions usually accompanying these high-priced fat-reducers tell you to do without breakfast and lunch, and replace these meals with a glass of liquid made by dissolving a teaspoonful or so of the product in a glass of water. Obviously if a person decreases the amount of food he eats, a reduction in weight will almost always result.

"The second group of fat-reducing products includes those which contain powerful laxative drugs. They may have some limited fat-reducing action, by rushing the food through the body so rapidly that it does not have an opportunity to be digested and absorbed. The continued use of purgative drugs is not calculated to improve the health of the user. On the contrary, serious injury may result.

"The third group of reducing preparations includes such dangerous drugs as dinitrophenol (dye-nye-tro-fee-nol), and other products which speed up the burning of the body fat to the point where the fatty tissue is actually utilized. Drugs in this class include thyroid, as well as dinitrophenol. Those substances are extremely dangerous, and have caused a great deal of serious harm. They should never be used except under the direction of a competent physician, who can carefully regulate the dosage and watch their effect.

"Since the present federal Food and Drugs Act does not now have jurisdiction over products of this type, dangerous though they may be, all that the Food and Drug Administration can do at present is to warn the public that they are dangerous.

"Speaking of dinitrophenol," continues your correspondent, "you may have read about the student nurse in Missouri who died some time ago from an overdose of this drug. She was taken ill while attending class, and was sick only a few hours. The physician in charge of the class noticed that she had broken out in perspiration, and advised her -- this was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon -- to report to the Superintendent of Nurses. The victim died suddenly, about 9 o'clock. Investigation disclosed that the suspected drug was not a secret fat reducer, but dinitrophenol, plainly labeled, and marked 'Poison.' There were two bottles of the drug, one intact and the other open with about one teaspoonful missing. No evidence was developed that the deceased had ever used any other fat-reducing agent except the dinitrophenol, allegedly responsible for her death.

"The Food and Drug Administration has a list of some of the names under which fat-reducing preparations containing dinitrophenol have been or are now being sold. If you want this list, write to the Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C. Ask for information on weight-reducers containing dinitrophenol -- spelled d-i-n-i-t-r-o-p-h-e-n-o-l."

Now here's an item that may be of particular interest to some of you. It's about "Stardom's Hollywood Diet," a so-called "Miracle Food" represented as a vitalizer, normalizer, and slenderizer. The product, "Stardom's Hollywood Diet," is a mixture of sugar, soybean flour, cocoa, and salt. It was offered for the reduction of weight. Its labeling also contained references to vitamins, "the presence of which," quoting your official report, "as determined by government experts, was insignificant. The directions called for the use of one teaspoonful of the mixture in place of a regular meal. A seven-ounce package sold for one dollar."

Well, the federal court evidently decided that this mixture of sugar, soybean flour, cocoa and salt, plus an insignificant vitamin content, would neither vitalize, normalize, nor slenderize -- for the so-called "Miracle Food" brought a fine of $50 to the Hollywood Diet Corporation of Chicago.

Today's report concludes with this statement: "It's up to the consumer to read carefully all labels on so-called fat-reducing preparations, to avoid preparations he knows to be harmful, or about which he knows nothing, and when in doubt, to consult a physician."

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